



## mudpuppy

*Necturus maculosus*

Kingdom:	Animalia
Division/Phylum:	Chordata - vertebrates
Class:	Amphibia
Order:	Caudata
Family:	Proteidae

### Features

Iowa's only fully aquatic salamander, the mudpuppy, ranges from eight to seventeen inches long. Its bushy, deep-red, external gills are retained throughout life. The body is gray or rust-brown. The back usually has scattered blue-black spots. The belly is gray, sometimes with dark spots. It has four toes on each of its feet (most salamanders have five toes on each hind foot). A dark stripe is present through the eye. The name "mudpuppy" comes from the mistaken belief that the animal "barks."

### Natural History

The mudpuppy lives in lakes, rivers, and large creeks. It is a very slimy animal. It eats crayfish, fishes, arthropods (spiders, insects, mites, etc.), annelids (segmented worms), and mollusks (snails, mussels). It is active at night throughout the year. Breeding occurs in the fall, but the eggs are not deposited until spring. About 100 eggs are laid, usually on the underside of a submerged rock or log. Eggs hatch in

about two months. The female remains with the eggs until they hatch. Occasionally, mudpuppies are caught by people fishing and recently a mudpuppy caught with minnow bait in the Shellrock River, Floyd County was recorded. The mudpuppy is found in most large rivers in eastern Iowa, however records for this species are scarce. Populations may be declining as a result of habitat degradation.

### Habitats

Mississippi River; interior rivers and streams

### Iowa Status

endangered; native

Channelization and the increase in pollutants in lower reaches of larger rivers likely affects the abundance of mudpuppies.

### Iowa Range

eastern one-third of Iowa

### Bibliography

Iowa Department of Natural Resources. 2001.  
*Biodiversity of Iowa: Aquatic Habitats* CD-ROM.